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Little League Baseball World Series

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**CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY, ST. PAUL: ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA: DEPARTMENT
OF KINESIOLOGY AND HEALTH SCIENCES**

Little League Baseball® World Series

**A GRADUATE PROJECT
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Arts Degree in Sport Management**

**by
Courtney C. Moriarty
St. Paul, Minnesota
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Dedications

*I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength,
that he considered me trustworthy, appointing me to his service.*

(1 Timothy 1:12, New International Version)

This research is dedicated to my parents, who stressed the importance of education as well as involvement in athletics even though they had not been afforded the same opportunities as their children.

This thesis is also indebted to the proponents of Title IX who gave thousands of women the chance to participate in interscholastic sports as well as created an era in which females can openly study and excel in a male-dominated field.

Abstract

This research reflected an examination of the history and current trends of the Little League Baseball® World Series and its parent organization Little League®. The tournament, held in South Williamsport, Pennsylvania each August draws hundreds of thousands of fans from across the globe, and creates a multi-million dollar revenue stream. Little League® is one of a handful of international non-profit entities, which introduces a unique set of business management techniques. Several of these facets were explored, including financial data, marketing initiatives, employee, and risk management as well as ethical practices in regards to the League as a whole, and more specifically the two-week competition for 11 and 12 year old boys. The author also reflected on her aspirations in regards to this capstone and the completion of her Master's Degree in Sport Management from Concordia University – St. Paul.

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Chapter One: Organization Introduction

Little League® (LL) is one of the most prominent organizations in youth sport – hosting over 2.4 million athletes on over 156,000 teams throughout 80 countries (Beauge, 2014) and growing exponentially from its origins as a three-team league in Williamsport, Pennsylvania in 1938. At that time, baseball was already prevalent in American culture, but no organized teams were available for pre-teen boys – a man named Carl Stotz decided to rectify the issue. Stotz gathered his nephews and their friends, experimented with various equipment and game rules, and gained sponsorships from local businesses. With the help of his wife and three other local couples, the term “Little League®” and its first Board of Directors were created. With the preface of providing “a wholesome program of baseball for the boys of Williamsport...” Little League® intended to use athletics “...as a way to teach them the ideals of sportsmanship, fair play, and teamwork” (LL, n.d.a, para. 10).

Stotz was named President and Commissioner, and the first season was underway in 1939 with games played in a vacant lot. The Board determined residency requirements in efforts to prevent “all-star” teams from being formed (a practice that is still in effect today), and decided that the program would serve only 11 and 12 year old boys (Wert, 2008). Stotz and his board of directors built their own field by 1943, and grew to 307 leagues in the first ten years. The quick expansion attracted the interest of U.S. Rubber (now Uniroyal), who became the first corporate sponsor of LL in 1948 and immediately began escalating the program in size. By 1954 there were over 3,300 leagues, thanks to media spots by both the Saturday Evening Post and newsreels of the new National Little League Tournament (which would eventually become the Little League World Series) (LL, n.d.c). The sponsorship can be viewed as the turning point from the community baseball program into the international conglomerate that it is today.

While U.S. Rubber did its part in growing the organization, its partnership with LL became very restrictive and led to the removal of Carl Stotz from the program in 1955. U.S. Rubber had previously sent Peter McGovern, a public relations executive, to work with Stotz to foster the league's publicity. McGovern eventually was named the second President of LL, while Stotz remained commissioner. The two had opposing views on several issues, such as the number of boys on each roster – McGovern changed it from 12 to 15, while Stotz felt that less players meant more playing time for each child – and the increasing focus on the World Series tournament detracted from the original community-based nature of LL. After his removal from LL, Stotz filed a lawsuit for breach of contract. The matter was settled out of court, but Stotz was relieved of his duties, after which he cut all ties with the program despite numerous invitations to various LL events (Dawidoff, 1989).

Despite the departure of its creator, Little League® has continued to grow in both size and scope. By 2015 it has stretched to six continents and now hosts both baseball and fastpitch softball for several age groups, including the Challenger division for children with mental and/or physical limitations. The mission statement has also been updated to reflect Little League®'s modern values that aim to "promote, develop, supervise, and voluntarily assist in all lawful ways, the interest of those who will participate in Little League® Baseball and Softball" (LL, n.d.b., para. 1). Even though LL and its International Tournament are worth millions of dollars and are household names across the globe, the website states that they want to focus on developing character rather than athletic prowess to create better citizens (LL, n.d.b). Although a very small percentage of Little Leaguers have gone onto play Major League baseball, notable graduates include other professional athletes, actors, artists, and prominent political figures, including former President George W. Bush (LL, 2014b).

Headquartered in Williamsport where it all began, the International Board of Directors now boasts 25 members dispersed throughout the world. These board members are responsible for overseeing the management of all facilities and affairs of LL, as well as the rules of play for each division. The Board also sits at the helm of the biggest youth sporting event in the world – the Little League Baseball® World Series (LLBWS). This two-week tournament is unlike any other competition, uniting pre-pubescent children with their cohorts from around the world, to compete in the sport of baseball. Subsequent chapters of this capstone will investigate the specifics of the LLBWS, including: venue, format, strategies for marketing and the management of employees and an ethical analysis of the event.

Chapter Two: Event Introduction

The National Little League Tournament was created by Carl Stotz in 1947, but by 1950 the name had to be updated to reflect entries from Panama and Canada (LL, 2014c). As the name and rules of Little League® were derived from Major League Baseball, commonly referred to as the “Big Leagues”, it seemed fitting that the tournament for miniature athletes reflected the same ancestry. In 1959 the league was gifted money from the estate of the late Howard J. Lamade, son of the founder of Grit newspaper, and constructed its first tournament complex in South Williamsport. Originally just a field with wood and steel stands assembled by student labor, the concrete stadium itself was built in 1968 and named after Mr. Lamade. Over the years, several minor renovations have been completed; additional seating in 1972, lights in 1992, field revisions in 2006, and additional stadium-style seats were installed in 2013. Volunteer Stadium was constructed in 2001 to alleviate the expansion of the tournament. The only quasi-renovation it has seen was in 2006, when the field was lengthened to comply with new Little League® field dimensions (ESPN, 2013; LL, 2013).

Both Lamade and Volunteer fields are covered in Kentucky Bluegrass sod that creates a pristine look for millions of viewers. Underneath is a specialized “Sand Grid Drainage System” that uses sand trenches in a lattice design to absorb excess water while still leaving the nutrient-rich topsoil in place (Hummer Sports Turf, 2015). Volunteer was the first of the stadiums to receive the upgrade in 2008, and was put to the test during the World Series that year. After over a half inch of rain fell in just nine minutes, the field was playable in less than half an hour, while all other games were cancelled for the evening. Little League® officials were so impressed by the field quality that they put Lamade through the same renovation the very next year (Hummer Sports Turf, 2015). Both stadiums boast unique seating arrangements – each contains roughly

3,000 seats, but the hills and terraces surrounding the field (primarily in the outfield) can seat an additional 2,000 fans at Volunteer and 40,000 at Lamade. These figures are widely estimated, as tickets for the LLBWS are free and distributed in a first come, first served basis; a rare perk in today's capitalistic society (ESPN, 2013). Beyond the two game fields, the complex has three practice fields, a Family Fun Zone, the official Little League® Store, Museum and Hall of Fame, concession stands, and a tent used for pin trading (Wood, 2015). There is a dormitory and dining hall for the players and coaches that are not available to the press or public, and a media center for interviews.

Local teams enter the International Tournament in July of each year and must win at the district, state, and regional level to earn a berth to the World Series (see Appendix A for the regional divisions). For Little League Baseball®, the Series hosts 16 teams – eight from the United States and eight international squads. A modified double-elimination phase weans the teams down to 4, who go into single-elimination bouts to determine the U.S. Champion and the International Champion. Those two teams play for the LLBWS World Championship, while the two defeated teams play for third place (LL, 2014b). Held during the last two weeks in August, the tournament draws hundreds of thousands of people to Williamsport, Pennsylvania, and millions more have viewed the games from the privacy of their own homes, courtesy of an eight-year, \$60 million contract with ESPN (Ourand, 2013).

That television revenue – \$4.2 million in 2013, per LL's tax filings – accounts for over half of the revenue generated by the LLBWS. The other \$3.1 million is all lumped under a heading titled "World Series Tournaments/Special Activities," which includes tournament entry fees, and miscellaneous income, likely from concession and souvenir sales. Appendix B shows a graphic breakdown of revenues (IRS, 2013). This income stream allows Little League® to

support the LLBWS, as well as the World Series tournaments for the other eight divisions of baseball and softball, held in various locations throughout the United States. Travel, lodging and meals for all athletes and coaches are by far the largest expense, amounting to over \$5.4 million. Those three categories are the only costs that are named specifically, while the other \$3.6 million that makes up the total expenditure for all of the World Series tournaments are balanced into full-time salaries, advertising, depreciation on the complex and other expenses of Little League® as a whole – See Appendix C for expense analysis (IRS, 2013).

With free tickets and family-friendly prices, producing revenue would seem to be a challenge for the LLBWS, but beyond the \$150 fee that each team pays to enter the International Tournament, LL is able to minimize their expenses via volunteerism and its non-profit status. From concessionaires and ticket takers to the umpires and field crew, people join waiting lists and fly across the country on their own accord to be a part of the magic that the LLBWS creates each August. 2015 marks the first year that each of the 109 umpires for the nine tournaments will receive a travel stipend, which may open the door to future compensation arrangements (LL, 2015b). Umpires may serve at a World Series tournament once every four years, but may only call at the LLBWS once in a lifetime. Due to this one-time restriction, being a volunteer umpire has been transformed into a hallowed honor.

Beyond the fields and behind the scenes, Little League® is classified as a 501 (c) (3) business which renders them exempt from taxes on their income, since it goes directly back into the various teams, tournaments, and programs. Several articles have been published with skepticism of the League's tax-exempt status, most of which cite that LL's CEO, Stephen Keener, makes over \$400,000 per year and repeatedly referring to the league's multi-million dollar income (Peter, 2014). What often goes unrecognized is that those numbers reflect the

entire league as opposed to profits of just the International Tournaments, and more specifically the LLBWS. In fact, LL's biggest chunk of revenue comes from "Royalties, License Fees and Corporate Sponsors" (LL, 2014a, p.25).

Also commonly left out of these desecrating articles is the enormous expense of running an international entity. The aforementioned tax documents account for a total of 410 employees, spread between Williamsport and the five American regional centers, as well as offices in Canada, Hong Kong, Poland, and Puerto Rico. Beyond staffing, the league also pays for background checks for each team and has made good on the decades-old promise to keep baseball affordable for families, with a measly \$16-per team charter fee to earn LL affiliation. With league operations accounting for a whopping 52.3% of the total expenses during the last fiscal year – far surpassing the tournaments' 33.2% – it is not justifiable to remove the tax-exempt status from the program solely on the basis of television revenues from the tournaments (LL, 2014a).

Between the rampant volunteerism, the tax-exempt status and the viewed "commercialization" of minor athletes instead of adults, the LLWS is a unique event that demands distinction in its management and execution. An event of this caliber should also be privy to an exceptional marketing strategy that aims to alleviate the downturn in participation of youth baseball and softball. LL has several assets at its disposal, including its long standing history and the family-centered atmosphere, but continues to seek new avenues for growth and success.

Chapter Three: Marketing Plan

Purpose

Creating a viable marketing plan involves combining these exclusive characteristics with the core values of the organization, which is mentioned in the introduction of this research, but is alternatively stated on their tax documentation as “developing the qualities of citizenship, discipline, teamwork and physical well-being by espousing the virtues of character, courage and loyalty” (IRS, 2014, p.2). With that mission in mind, LL should be using their televised events to grow their participation rates by 3%, in efforts to develop these children into well-rounded adults – a difficult task in the midst of current downward trends in youth athletics.

Product

Mullin, Hardy, and Sutton (2007) defined the core of the sport product as the “event experience, composed of four components:

- Game Form (rules/techniques)
- Players
- Equipment and apparel
- Venue” (p.149).

Stripped to its core, the LLBWS is merely a game of baseball – nine players take positions on the field, whilst the other team attempts to hit a pitched ball with a bat. The fielders must earn three “outs” against the batting team by striking them out at the plate, catching a batted ball in the air, or throwing the ball to the base that the batter is running to reach. When the three outs are procured, the teams switch between batting and fielding, which completes one half-inning -- games go for a determined number of innings, or by a time limit. The standard apparel is long

pants, a short-sleeved jersey and cap with a brim to shield the players' eyes from the sun. Basic necessities for equipment include cleats (shoes with metal or plastic protrusions on the sole for better traction), a glove/mitt (a leather covering for the catching hand), bat (created from wood, or a metal composite), and a batting helmet to protect from errant pitches. Additional equipment that is common includes athletic protectors (known as the jock strap), batting gloves to provide grip when swinging the bat, and various guards for the face/shins/elbows.

Baseball venues, whether in abandoned lots or luxurious stadiums incorporate a diamond shape, at the bottom of which is "home plate" with first, second and third bases in the other corners in a counter-clockwise order. The outfield extends the first and third baselines and connects in a semi-circle. When positioning players on the field, one player will be at each of the four bases, with an additional fielder, the short stop, standing between second and third bases. The pitcher stands in the middle of the diamond and throws towards the catcher at home plate, and the remaining three fielders are equally spaced in the outfield, logically dubbed as outfielders.

Although there are more detailed nuances to each of these components, they represent the basic makeup of any baseball game. There are also supplemental elements that narrow the game of baseball into the LLBWS tournament, like the age of the players, the family-driven atmosphere of the complex, and the region-specific uniforms. The uniforms – more specifically, the hats – have been turned into a brand extension of the tournament, being sold in both retail locations and online (LL, 2015c). Technically, the World Series Tournaments are a brand extension of Little League® itself, bringing in a new revenue stream and creating publicity for the parent organization.

Project Market

Recognizing both helpful and harmful attributes of any company and the economy in which it stands is crucial for setting realistic and reachable goals. Little League® and its World Series are no exception -- LL encourages each of its local leagues to perform their own SWOT analyses to boost their programs within the organization as a whole (LL, 2014d). This strategic planning tool can also be used to set goals for a specific event to assess the internal strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities and threats from external sources.

Strengths. The LLBWS displays several internal assets, including the program's history and brand recognition, the lucrative television contracts, a strong volunteer base, well-forged international relationships and advanced safety protocols. These concepts, created by Little League®, push the World Series to be better each year.

Weaknesses. No organization or event is perfect, and the LLBWS is no exception. The same television contracts that procure the extravagant revenue and media coverage also endorse the professionalization of the minor athletes, as well as give a voice to those aiming to remove the League's tax-exempt status. The aging stadiums will shortly need renovations and the formatting of the tournament (U.S. versus the World) leaves more to be desired, especially in the current era of political correctness. The tournament format also leaves more to be desired – it is designed in such a way that the United States teams always compete against an international squad for the title instead of a true open tournament. In addition, all nine World Series tournaments are held in the United States, despite having LL offices in several other countries. These nuances could be interpreted as American elitism, and may detract from the international growth that LL seeks.

Opportunities. A massive external trend that could assist Little League® in growing the World Series rests in the gender equality movement, demonstrated in 2014 when Mo'ne Davis, a

girl from Philadelphia, became the first female to earn a win and pitch a shutout at the LLWS and gained media attention from around the world (Jones, 2015). Similarly, the potential for growth outside the United States poses hope for growing overall participation rates, even if they are not in domestic programs. Beyond the game itself, the brand extension possibilities inherent in youth apparel and equipment production serve as another channel to grow recognition of the tournament, as well as Little League® as a whole.

Threats. Several factors have played into the reduction of teams vying to get to the LLWS that are out of Little League®’s control, the most harmful of which is specialization. Children deciding to focus on a sport other than baseball is an obvious detriment to Little League®, but more conspicuously those who do choose baseball as their only outlet are at risk for burnout and injury. These dangers are exasperated by travel leagues and off-season clinics that extend body usage and fail to incorporate necessary rest periods. Justin Thill (2014) of the Bradenton Herald went so far as to state that “travel ball has killed youth baseball at the local level” (para. 3).

Little League® was built on the back of the notion that baseball is America’s pastime. Although Little League® has used its rich history to create a fundamentally strong program in the World Series, with the changing landscape of youth sports in the U.S. the focus may have to shift to international development to maintain or grow their overall participation rate.

Alternatively, LL may be able to revive American participation with new initiatives, as with their inner-city programming.

Position

The LLBWS has always been positioned as a family event that promotes the ideals of sportsmanship and camaraderie between players of various heritages. Interestingly enough, Little League® does not directly promote the World Series tournaments, instead allowing ESPN to run all coverage and commercialization, with additional broadcasts and other marketing materials produced by partner sponsors. Television commercials have been the biggest influence – the earliest that specifically references the World Series as opposed to the League as a whole dates back to 2003 and shows a group of kids from various regions explaining the rules of the game (The Vault, 2010). No matter the media used to transpire the message, the focus is always on the kids and how much fun they are having on the field. With the onset of instant media, the commercials are now produced with live game coverage and ready to air before the team takes the field the next day, which allows the public that does not tune into the game catch quick glimpses of the athleticism and excitement of these young competitors.

Pick Players

Positioning the LLBWS as a family event makes the selection of consumers a less daunting task. Demographically, most of the fans reside in the United States, and have some tie to Little League® or youth baseball as a whole – either they are a current or former player, or are associated with someone who is/was involved with the organization. Although Little League® heavily promotes underprivileged neighborhoods with its inner city support system, marketing of the World Series should be directed towards the middle to upper class income tiers. These families have the means necessary to not only pay to watch ESPN, but also to travel to Williamsport to view the tournament live.

This also funnels into the psychographic segmentation of consumers with family interests and lifestyles that promote their children participating in athletics, whether for the basic benefits

of participation or in hopes of a scholarship and/or a professional career. Since these families are typically comprised of parents in their thirties and early forties, their media tastes are fairly sophisticated. Beyond television, the internet and social media have made the LLBWS more accessible to those who do not have the purchasing power to watch the games on ESPN. Via market segmentation, the marketers for the LLBWS can focus on middle-class families that have children in the 6-16 age range, and are actively involved in athletics, particularly baseball and softball. These are the consumers most likely to travel to the LLBWS and purchase items related to the tournament.

Package

The LLBWS has a unique package in that there are no tickets to be sold – their income is already derived from the ESPN contract, as well as the fees paid by each team to enter the overarching International Tournament. They do, however, sell concessions and souvenirs at very modest prices to entice visitors that have already paid to travel to Williamsport – a family of four can park, eat and get a program for about \$30. (LL, 2014b). This type of admission is nearly unheard of in modern athletics, and serves as a selling point for families to spend their vacations at the LLBWS.

Promotion

Little League® has a variety of avenues in which to promote both the overall league, as well as the LLBWS. LL utilizes several types to promotions, including one-way messages such as paid advertising, as well as open communication with the media and fans. Each type of promotion rests on the structure of the League's mission statement and its family-friendly atmosphere. Several approaches to bring awareness to the tournament are examined further:

Advertising. Television spots for the LLBWS can be seen in early August on various ESPN channels – these commercials always show tournament action from years past and fan interaction to entice viewers to tune in to watch. Little League® has websites for both the league and the tournament with up-to-date information, as well as historical data, and their social media accounts with Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest and Instagram draw in a wide variety of consumers. LL controls these accounts and the information that is released on each platform.

Publicity. Unlike the controlled nature of advertising, the LLBWS is at the mercy of the news cycle, whether or not they want certain stories to be published. Naturally, the tournament makes headlines every year because it is a unique event that is deeply rooted in the history of sports in the United States. There are always positive features, like female pitcher Mo’ne Davis and the heartwarming speech of Rhode Island coach Dave Belisle after his team lost a close game in the 2014 tournament (Sun, 2014). However, bad media is promulgated just as much, if not more than, the good – there are several skeptics of the tournament in regards to its commercialization of young, unpaid athletes, and poor behavior of athletes, parents and coaches can tarnish the League’s reputation. Most recently, the Jackie Robinson West team out of Chicago lost their 2014 U.S. Championship title after Little League® discovered their boundary map had been falsified (Farrey & McDonald, 2015).

Community and Public Relations. Little League® attempts to develop positive relationships with its target audiences through safety, inclusion and diversity. The League is recognized for its creation of the pitch count, designed to reduce the risk of arm injury, however a lesser-known partnership with the National Spit Tobacco Education Program (NSTEP) educates players, parents and coaches about the risks of spit tobacco use because it is widely associated with the sport of baseball (LL, 2015d). Little League® also has two initiatives to

expand its array of community participants – the Challenger league “provides opportunities for boys and girls with physical and developmental challenges to enjoy the benefits of Little League® participation” (LL, 2015e, para. 2), and the Urban Initiative program provides monetary and educational assistance to underprivileged programs in inner-city locales. Expanding opportunities to those who may not have otherwise had the privilege of playing Little League® baseball exudes compassion and a desire to live out the organization’s mission, which in turn creates a trustworthy reputation and attracts new participants.

Media Relations. Little League® is very proactive in its association with various media outlets, ESPN in particular. Both the League and each of the World Series websites has a separate tab for media information – complete with contracts, regulations and media guides, as well as trademark protection clauses and archives of news from years past. At the LLWS tournament, ESPN has a dominant presence with several cameras on and around each field, as well as their mobile studio in the Family Fun Zone for more digital interaction with the fans (Wood, 2015). There is also a media center for interviews with the teams, complete with translators for the international squads.

Sponsorship. Little League® has had partnerships with corporate entities since its inception, when Lycoming Dairy, Lundy Lumber and Jumbo Pretzel sponsored the first three teams. Today, that partnership has grown to 17 National Sponsors that can be segregated into the following categories:

- Apparel: New Era, Oakley, Russell Athletic
- Equipment/Training: Baseball Factory, Dudley, Easton, Musco Lighting, Spalding
- Food: Bomb Pop, Frosted Flakes, Gatorade, Heinz, Lance, Subway

- Parent-Directed: All/Snuggle, Canon, Honda (LL, n.d.a.).

These sponsors give varying amounts of money to Little League® to be affiliated with this well-known organization and its family-centered mission. The food vendors cater to children and in most cases, the atmosphere of baseball games – like Heinz ketchup on a hotdog at the stadium or Gatorade being sipped by the players between innings. The apparel and equipment/training categories host a number of companies that create items directly needed for the tournament, like Easton’s batting helmets and Russell’s jerseys, as well as other athlete-specific concepts, like the personal training and college recruiting help that can be acquired through Baseball Factory.

Staying true to the market segmentation discussed previously, Little League® also directs its sponsorship efforts towards the parents of the players, who are responsible for nearly all of the purchases made by/for their kids. All/Snuggle connects with parents who are constantly washing game attire, while Canon entices parents to use their cameras to get the best action shot. These partnerships serve as open avenues for both sponsors as well as Little League® to gain new consumers based on each other’s reputations and marketable products (LL. 2015f).

Place

Another unique concept to the LLBWS is its general seating policy. The terraces beyond the outfield of each stadium are always available to anyone who wants to sit there. The stadium seats themselves also have open access up until the penultimate day of the tournament, when tickets are distributed in a first-come, first-served fashion at the will call window. The final day, which holds the World Series Consolation and Championship games, have tickets that are distributed through an internet lottery drawing that must be entered by April 30 before the

tournament begins (LL, 2015g). This forces those who think their child has a chance to attend the World Series to prepare months in advance.

Promise: Evaluation of Strategy and Tactics

Assessing the validity of this marketing plan will be a creative task, as the goal of hosting the tournament is to grow overall participation rates for the league. Basic data retrieval is needed to see if that occurs in the following year, as well as both customer and sponsor responses to see if partnering with Little League® has satisfied their marketing objectives. For the fans at the World Series tournaments, utilizing on-site and online surveys, as well as social media analytics, will incur a response from a wide demographic of attendees. A more delicate, hands-on approach is best suited for the 19 sponsors. Depending on their location, a personal or phone/video visit from the Vice President of Marketing to ensure that they are happy with the partnership is appropriate. Alternatively, a Sponsor Soiree could be hosted after the World Series, where all of the sponsors could be recognized and celebrated in Williamsport.

Chapter Four: Employee/Volunteer Planning

Beyond the unique marketing techniques of a no-ticket tournament, the LLBWS is also one of the few publicized sports tournaments that is almost completely volunteer-driven. This creates a shift in how they are to be managed in contrast to LL's full-time staff. Examining various leadership styles and techniques will shed light on how each group is to be supervised and encouraged in their work. Yukl (2012) described four categories of leaders: Task-Oriented, Relations-Oriented, Change-Oriented, and External. As with many other social and psychological classifications, there is never a full conformity to only one trait, but more of a sliding scale with grey areas between the categories. This is necessary as our interactions with various humans necessitates a variety of communication and management styles.

A task-oriented manager "defines the roles of their followers, focuses on goal achievement, and establishes well-defined patterns of communication" (Taberner et al, 2009, p.1394). This type of management will be best suited for the seasonal volunteers, as there is little time for training and low expectations for growth from both parties. Mahsud, Yukl, and Prussia (2010) call this type of employment a low-quality exchange relationship, where "subordinates are only expected to perform the formal requirements of their jobs, and extra benefits are not provided by the leader" (p.562).

Although task-oriented skills can also be applied with permanent employees, the focus must shift to allow room for relationship-building capabilities to foster job satisfaction and desire to improve amongst themselves. Taberner et al. (2009) referred to this as consideration, where the leader "shows concern and respect for their followers, looks out for their welfare, and expresses appreciation and support" (p.1394). There are numerous ways for an LL leader to demonstrate consideration, including recognizing each individual's performance and

contributions to Little League® and the LLBWS, listening to their ideas and strategies for the company, and being able to connect with them on a personal level outside of baseball.

The fact that these employees are available year-round gives ample opportunities for discussion and engagement. Special skills like diversity inclusion will play a huge factor, as the regional directors span several countries, each with specific cultural customs that must be respected and celebrated. Showing interest in each staff member, while promoting the passion and ideals surrounding youth sports, will hopefully create a climate of collective efficacy, where the individual employees strive to bring their strengths and talents to serve the greater purpose of Little League®.

Beyond the two main types of leadership skills, Yukl (2012) also mentioned Change-oriented and External leadership behaviors. Yukl's 2012 assessment of Change-oriented conduct included envisioning and advocating change and innovation, while creating an inclusive learning environment. These skills could also align with relationship-oriented leading, as encouraging personnel to participate in building the League's future will give them a sense of ownership and improve morale. Additionally, External leadership involves representing and networking with outside sources to promote and potentially recruit new staff (Yukl, 2012). As with communication styles and personality profiles, leadership skills and behaviors are never "one size fits all." People who are at one of the ends of the task vs. relationship spectrum will undoubtedly flounder if they are not proactive in learning how to integrate the skills that are unnatural to them. Managers who are able to flow freely between the two styles will succeed at retaining employees, as well as driving them to surpass company goals while adhering to its mission.

Chapter Five: Risk Management Plan

Little League® prides itself on being proactive in providing a safe environment for its athletes and fans, and expects that each of the chapters across the globe do the same. Little League® and its World Series events are subject to both business standards of practice, as well as the guidelines set forth for youth baseball and the safety of its patrons. Creating a risk management plan for any sporting event entails identifying and mitigating hazards to minimize liability for the organization. Van der Smissen (as cited in Cotton & Wolohan, 2012) described four categories of risk, each of which the LLBWS is subject to: public liability including negligence, public liability excluding negligence, business operations, and property exposures.

Public Liability Including Negligence

LL and the World Series tournaments are always at a risk of negligence lawsuits, as are any public event. More specifically, injuries to players and/or fans can initiate a costly lawsuit. The tournament grounds in Williamsport are used heavily for two weeks out of the year. Between human usage and weather-related depreciation, several property exposures may exist, including faulty seating, damaged restrooms, and/or other hazardous items related to the building. Beyond the tournament itself, if LL does any construction work on the complex in the off season, it would create an attractive nuisance. This opens LL to liability “for injuries to children who trespass on land if the injury results from a hazardous object or condition on the land that is likely to attract children who are unable to appreciate the risk posed by the object or condition” (Legal Information Institute, n.d., para 1.) These kinds of hazards can be reduced by visible signage in potentially dangerous areas, vigilant observation and appropriate repairs by LL staff or licensed contractors. Little League® has already attempted to mitigate potential health risks by staffing a medical tent through the tournament and partnering with Philips Healthcare to procure automated external defibrillators (AEDs) for the LLBWS. (Philips, 2015).

Public Liability Excluding Negligence

Public liability that does not involve negligence revolves around the internal practices of Little League® and can include lawsuits for employment issues, sexual harassment, and malpractice (Cotton & Wolohan, 2012). Little League® was the defendant in a 1974 court case for this type of liability. In the case a girl and her parents sued for monetary damages because the League's then male-only policy was unconstitutional. Later that year, Little League® publicly announced that females would be allowed to play alongside the male athletes (Georgia Trial Lawyers Association, 2013).

Civil liberty lawsuits also fall under this category, one of which was widely publicized for LL in 1992 when a court ruled that they had violated the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Lawrence Anderson, a wheelchair-bound base coach, was prohibited from his coaching duties when LL arbitrarily began to enforce its own policy regarding base coaches in wheelchairs that could be a risk to children on the field. The court found “no indication...that Anderson poses a direct threat to the health and safety of others” (Kozlowski, 1994, p. 4) and enforced a restraining order to prevent Little League® from keeping Anderson off the field. Although there was not a monetary risk in this instance, the image of Little League® and its reputation of inclusion for all was tainted, which could have led to a loss of income and public trust in subsequent years.

Business Operations

The millions of dollars received and spent during the LLBWS poses a threat for fraud, embezzlement and other unsavory financial actions by both the Board of Directors as well as the volunteers directly in contact with revenue from the tournament. Little League® is proactive in requiring background checks for all volunteers, but may not have ample time to adequately train

concession workers in the nuances of internal theft. Stringent money tracking and recordkeeping can assist in deterring potential issues, as well as creating an enjoyable work environment for the many tournament volunteers.

Property Exposures

Little League® assumes a certain amount of risk in owning the property of the tournament complex. As such, LL is liable to damages resulting from elemental dangers like fire, lightning and flood, as well as human crimes like theft and vandalism (Cotton & Wolohan, 2012). Property exposure risks are typically transferred to insurance companies for a premium and possibly a deductible at the time of claim (Aicher, Paule-Koba, & Newland, 2016).

Even beyond the risks that LL must review during their own events, the organization must also be cognizant of the equipment that it certifies to be used in other youth baseball games. This was proven in a 2012 lawsuit in which a child that was pitching in a game not hosted by Little League® and was struck by a batted ball from a metal bat. Little League® had previously went on record saying that metal bats were safe to use in children's games, so they were held liable for the injury. Along with the bat manufacturer and sporting goods store where the bat was purchased as co-defendants, the total damages paid by the three entities totaled \$14.5 million (Associated Press, 2012).

As Little League® has learned throughout its long history, not all hazards can be evaded. Being proactive in avoiding, reducing, or transferring risk is key in minimizing loss, and LL has made considerable effort to protect itself from lawsuits and arbitration. As the American society becomes more and more litigious, LL will need to review its risk management plan on an annual or even quarterly basis to keep its reputation and finances intact and its participants safe.

Chapter Six: Ethical Analysis

Little League®'s penchant for safety is part of the overarching desire to be a morally just organization, to serve as a role model for the staff, participants, and other organizations. Many have disagreed with this notion, with accusations that LL “lost its way long ago, succumbing to the temptation... forgetting that at its core should not be a sense of capitalistic greed but rather promoting and teaching those values defined by the corporation’s pledge” (Graney, 2015, para. 5). Much of the naysaying surrounds the publicity of the LLWS and how damaging it can be to the adolescent psyche.

The LLWS Championship game was first televised in 1953, and went to live broadcasting in 1985 (Castrodale, n.d.), but has since been increasingly publicized at an exponential level. In 2015, all 32 games of the LLBWS, as well as over 90 regional and World Series games for the other eight divisions of Little League® aired on ESPN and its affiliate stations in a 24-day span (LL 2015g). Critics claim that ESPN, ABC, and the Little League® organization are exploiting these young athletes, who are in the fragile stages of puberty and are already under enough stress during this competition. Bill Plaschke of the Los Angeles Times went as far as to call the “public viewing of pubescent angst under the guise of a baseball game [as] opportunistic, offensive and just plain wrong” (Plaschke, 2011, para.7).

Contrarily, Kelly McBride (2011) of the Poynter Review Project said that ESPN could go deeper, using the high emotions seen on the field as instruction for young athletes to “articulate what aspect of those tears is a part of a healthy, normal response -- and what is unhealthy” (para 13). For parents, the goal of the telecast is to learn to “responsibly manage young athletic talent” in attempts to curb the intense pressure that now coexists with elite youth sports (McBride, 2011, para 24). With many viewpoints from various sources weighing in on the issue, the ethical

viability of the production of the LLWS can be examined with the three approaches presented by Malloy and Zakus (1995) – teleological, deontological, and existential.

The teleological approach was defined by Malloy and Zakus (1995) to assume that “decisions can be judged good or bad based on their outcomes or consequences alone” (p. 40). In that respect, most would agree that televising the LLWS had good outcomes for those involved:

- The kids, even those who lost, would be able to say that they once played baseball on national television.
- Williamsport, the small Pennsylvania town where the tournament is held, shows tourism numbers skyrocket during the month of August, creating jobs and an influx of revenue for its residents.
- ESPN is an obvious winner, with millions of dollars pouring in from cable subscriptions and online viewer interaction.
- Little League® Baseball®, who has been said to use “television rights fees to fund background checks for Little League® volunteers” (Plaschke, 2011, para.23).

To combat these points would require retroactive data and in-depth psychological analysis, including finding former LLBWS participants and studying whether the pressure of media coverage had a lasting effect on their athletic careers, as well as their overall lives. Therefore, publicizing the LLBWS is teleologically ethical.

The second approach to determining ethical behavior, deontology, involves adhering to societal values that determine what is “right” and what is “wrong.” In this context, it would seem that airing the games is ethical, as it is what the public wants to see. However, fixating the camera on any athlete who is physically or emotionally injured would be morally unjust, as our

society shies away from personal distress. As discussed by Malloy and Zakus (1995), the ever-changing style of societies, both local and global, can create confusion during decision making.

Lastly, existentialism is an approach that requires the decision maker to “accept absolute responsibility for all actions and consequences (i.e., all means and ends for oneself and for others)” (Malloy & Zakus, 1995). In essence, the executives at ESPN and Little League® Baseball would need to be able to envision every possible outcome from televising the games -- what if a player shown crying was taunted when he returned home, eventually leading to his suicide? If the decision makers were authentic and true in their choices, this would still be considered as morally right and virtuous.

Although the concrete evidence has yet to be presented on the true outcomes of playing youth sports under the scrutiny of several cameras and thousands of fans, at a base level it appears to be an ethical practice. ESPN has done its part and tried to cut away from images of tearful kids (McBride, 2011) to bolster its position with skeptics, but continues to add cameras and airtime to more and more games to expand the experience to other children who do not get to make the trip to Williamsport. Unfortunately, even with the ethical practices demonstrated by both LL and ESPN, individuals who are supposed to be representing LL are damaging its reputation with their own lack of character.

There have been multiple instances of cheating in the LLWS, including the aforementioned boundary map scandal – one of three in the tournament’s history, as well as the infamous Danny Almonte debacle, whose 2001 team was stripped of its third-place finished after birth records showed that he was 14 years old. (FoxSports, 2015). In 2015, the Little League® Softball World Series was put in the spotlight when a Washington team lost on purpose, sitting its best players and swinging at pitches in the dirt to force a tie-breaking rule that would

eliminate a strong opponent out of the tournament. Beyond the World Series events, 37 Little League® chapters have reported embezzlement by league officials or their relatives since 2009 to the tune of nearly \$2 million (Gordon, 2014). LL does what it can to be proactive, requiring background checks for all volunteers and offering crime insurance (Gordon, 2014), but the actions of these individuals are reflecting poorly on Little League® and clouding the public's view of its morality in regards to its purpose as a program for children.

Chapter Seven: Personal Statement

Choosing the Little League® Baseball World Series as my capstone project was very logical – I am a youth baseball coach, have intern experience with a local baseball league, and aspire to be involved in youth and community recreation. I was not prepared, however, for the wealth of information I would come to learn about leadership, ethics and other aspects of sport management – all from my studies and classmates at Concordia- St. Paul.

Before this program, I was under the notion that leaders were born, not bred -- and as the oldest of four, with an Extraverted Sensing Thinking Judging (ESTJ) personality (based on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator®), leading others has come easily to me. From my siblings to teammates and peers in school, I have never had difficulty establishing my presence in a group and steering the conversation. After 10 courses over 18 months, it is now apparent that leaders are built by ambition and humility, and do not need a predetermined personality to make an impact. Kevin Kruse (2013) of Forbes Magazine went so far as to define leadership in the following manner:

- "Leadership stems from social influence, not authority or power
- Leadership requires others, and that implies they don't need to be "direct reports"
- No mention of personality traits, attributes, or even a title; there are many styles, many paths, to effective leadership
- It includes a goal, not influence with no intended outcome" (p. 2).

This revelation has already inspired change as well as produced results in how I interact with others in my work relationships, as well as my coaching and other volunteer efforts.

Beyond the immediate future, this program has further prepared me for a career in athletics by honing my active listening skills, as well as provided a broader base of

understanding of business finance, marketing and legal aspects. In addition to my educational development, my time spent at Concordia has gifted me with the camaraderie of a dozen bright, ambitious individuals with whom I now have the pleasure of networking with and continually learning from through sharing experiences. My cohorts will go on to lead in areas very different than the path I have chosen, and I will be able to gain insight and further develop my skills from their wisdom.

Before building on others' acquired acumen for leadership, I had to determine where I am in my own journey and what I am aiming to accomplish. Knowing that I want to be involved in youth and community recreation, I devised my own mission statement:

My goal is to foster the physical and psychological benefits of recreation, while helping others build character through sport. I aim to educate and inspire the next generation of athletes to be faster, stronger, and smarter than their predecessors.

With my intentions stated, I moved towards assessing my current level of leadership – the Leadership Trait Questionnaire provided a base to reflect on my own strengths and weaknesses. The same survey was given to eight assorted acquaintances, from family members to teammates and co-coaches, with varying lengths and depths of relationship. The results were anonymous and tabulated into the table in Appendix D. To my surprise, my test group rated me higher than my self-assessment in 11 of the 14 categories -- even after explicit instruction to be unbiased from our personal relationships. I was rather disheartened to receive no ratings lower than four as I feel that I have not reached my potential and have room for growth. That being said, perhaps my traits are in tune, and I can turn my focus to learning new styles and approaches to leadership to make me a well-rounded administrator.

The second inventory, the Implicit Association Test (IAT), gave me much better insight. The IAT is designed to help people “gain greater awareness about their own unconscious preferences and beliefs” (Project Implicit, 2007b, para. 1) and the results were very disconcerting. Against what I cognitively believe and proclaim, I subconsciously associate males with career terminology and females with family expressions. This aligns with 76% of web respondents from Project Implicit®, an ongoing evaluation of several IATs by researchers at Harvard University (Project Implicit, 2007a). Luckily, I am not alone in my surprise, as

“many people are surprised to find out that they have a biased association favoring males and leadership, especially when it is incompatible with their states egalitarian values. This test is designed to show people that they might hold associations that they are unaware of and to make people aware of the broad reach of these stereotypes” (Northouse, 2013, p.373).

Being aware of my personal traits and subconscious biases allows me to build a foundation for my development plan, but to build upon it will require research into several leadership theories and approaches, as different contexts call for different types of influence. This makes the contingency theory pertinent to my success, as it “provides the framework for effectively matching the leader and the situation” (Northouse, 2013, p.123). Using Fiedler’s Least Preferred Coworker (LPC) Measure, I was rated as a Low LPC, indicating that I am task-motivated as opposed to relational-motivated.

The assessment required me to think of a person with whom I did not work well with, and my mind immediately flashed back to a subordinate in one of my retail experiences. He was always unpleasant -- he once mentioned that he had to save his niceness for the customers and did not have any left to waste on us, his coworkers. That, along with a constant bemoaning about

the job in general and a haughty sense of entitlement with a dash of misogyny made working alongside him emotionally draining. Eventually I had the conversation with him that I did not care whether he liked me, but he did have to respect my authority and do what was required of him, which highlights my low LPC score. Task completion is so much more important in a retail setting, especially one where the turnover is high due to a collegiate atmosphere.

These minimally supervisory positions also demanded that my technical and human skills be more pertinent than my conceptual aptitudes, which concurs with R.L. Katz' three-skill approach (Northouse, 2013). As I steer away from retail and enter my chosen field of youth and community recreation, I will need to be able to work with ideas as opposed to things, while still keeping my interpersonal proficiencies intact. While this cohort program has certainly started me on the right path to abstract thinking, it will be something that I need to continually work to improve on, as it is not a natural concept.

Another on-going challenge will entail credibility building. Beckner (2013) gives five characteristics that credible leaders must possess, including:

- “Knowledge about your job, duties and customers
 - Understanding of related influences including the needs of those you supervise and those above you in the hierarchy
 - Awareness of past, current and future trends
 - the ability to state your goals, strategies and objectives in a clear manner
 - Creating clear performance measures for monitoring progress and measuring success”
- (para. 5).

Until I make the switch from an insignificant job to a meaningful career, I will need to attempt to build my integrity through other means. My experience as a collegiate athlete and

youth coach will serve as stepping stones of comprehension of the sport sector, and my formal education has given me the tools to be able to intelligently discuss and review my aspirations. I intend to join one or more recognized sport associations to further my training as well as stay current on events and trends in the athletic atmosphere. Beyond my chosen field, I also have the opportunity to improve my leadership qualities in my community -- I have been volunteering for the Saint Patrick's Association (SPA) since 2013, and have recently taken on the role of co-chair for one of the committees. This gives me an avenue to grow in multiple areas, helping me retain a work-life balance while still retaining the same passion for effective leadership.

Combining my personal traits, education and experiences with my ambition to succeed both personally and professionally, I have constructed the following leadership development plan:

2015

I will complete my graduate coursework and receive my Master's Degree, while beginning to apply for sport-related careers. Although I realize my options would be greater with the willingness to relocate, I will begin my search locally, and the St. Paul – Minneapolis area is home to several professional, collegiate, and recreational sports teams. I will also enter my first year as Committee Co-Chair for the SPA, with the primary goal of recruiting new members.

2016

With my courses behind me, I will join multiple sport association(s), like the North American Society for Sport Management, National Recreation and Park Association or the International Sociology of Sport Association. Networking with these members will open doors to new opportunities for both education and employment. Personally, I will continue my volunteer efforts with both Hayden Heights Baseball and the SPA and make efforts to take on new responsibilities in each organization.

2017

I intend to find employment in the sports sector by 2017, and will be able to use my education and experiences to excel my new career. I will persist in finding networking opportunities and developing professionally. Dependent on my occupation at the time, I may or may not be able to continue coaching, but will be vigilant in looking for programs that need assistance. I will also revisit my development plan to ensure that it is on track.

2018

At this point I will have been involved with the SPA for five years, and will begin the shadowing process to be nominated to the Executive Board. During this time we, as an organization, should be reviewing the protocols in place and seeking avenues for growth. I will also be in position to begin supervisory duties at my job, and will be able to assist in development of both the company's strategic plans as well as new employees.

2019

After a year of shadowing, I will be primed to run for Executive Board of the SPA. I will need to train the person chosen to fill my seat on the Miss Shamrock Committee, as well as learn the new tasks required of a Board Member. By this time I plan to have enough seniority at my company to make coaching a priority again, this time as a Head Coach. I will continue to review this leadership plan and adjust according to the circumstances my life affords me at that point in time.

My personal development plan, while fluid, builds the foundation of some of my goals for the next five years. By 2020 I intend to be a Head Coach, even if at the recreational level, and have a blossoming career in the sport management field. I will also provide my leadership skills to better my community by being elected to the Executive Board of my beloved Irish organization.

These goals are measurable, achievable, and relevant to my education and experience, and will be reviewed and adjusted on an annual basis. Meanwhile, I hope to remain in contact with my peers and professors from my graduate journey at Concordia St. Paul, to reflect on how our lessons have turned into experiences and how we may provide insight to the next generation of students.

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Appendices

Appendix A



Figure 1. Geographic Divisions of the Little League® Baseball World Series. This figure illustrates the United States and International regions that send one team to the LLBWS

Appendix B

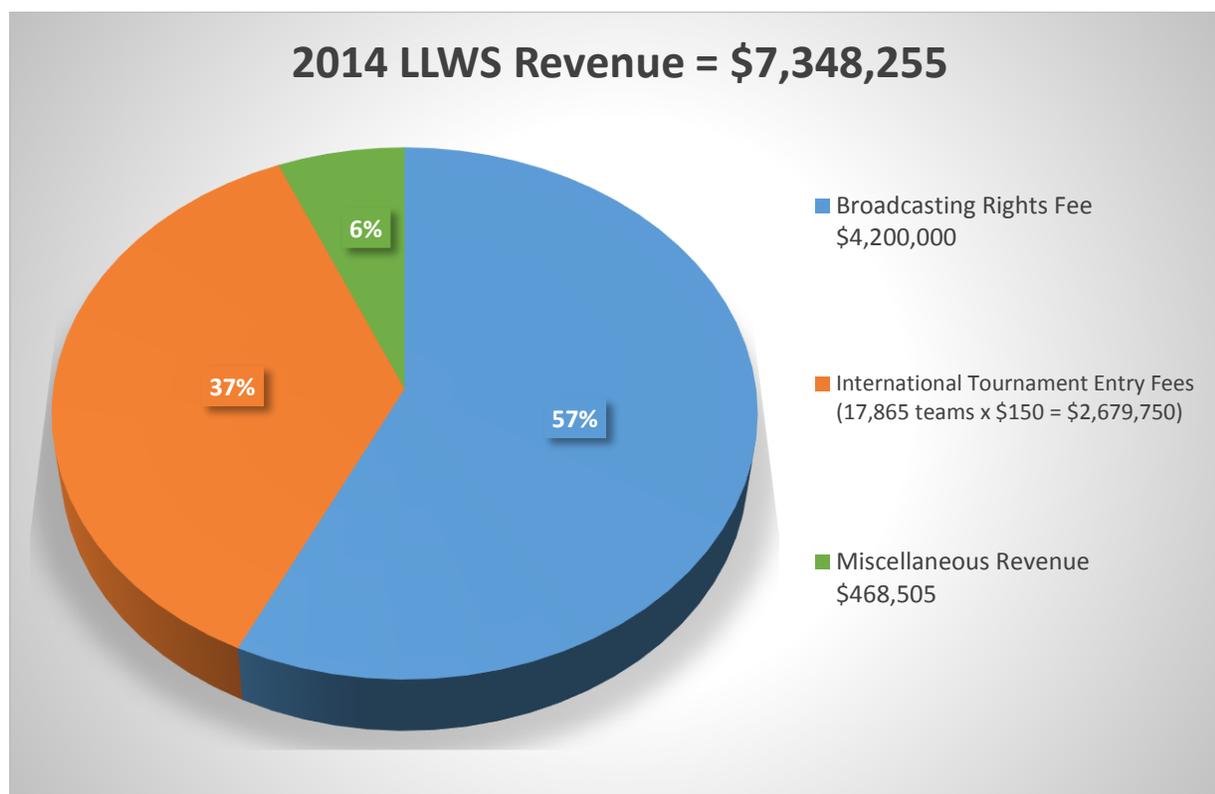


Figure 1. Revenue of the 2014 Little League® World Series Tournaments. This pie chart shows the income streams of all nine Little League® World Series Tournaments.

Appendix C

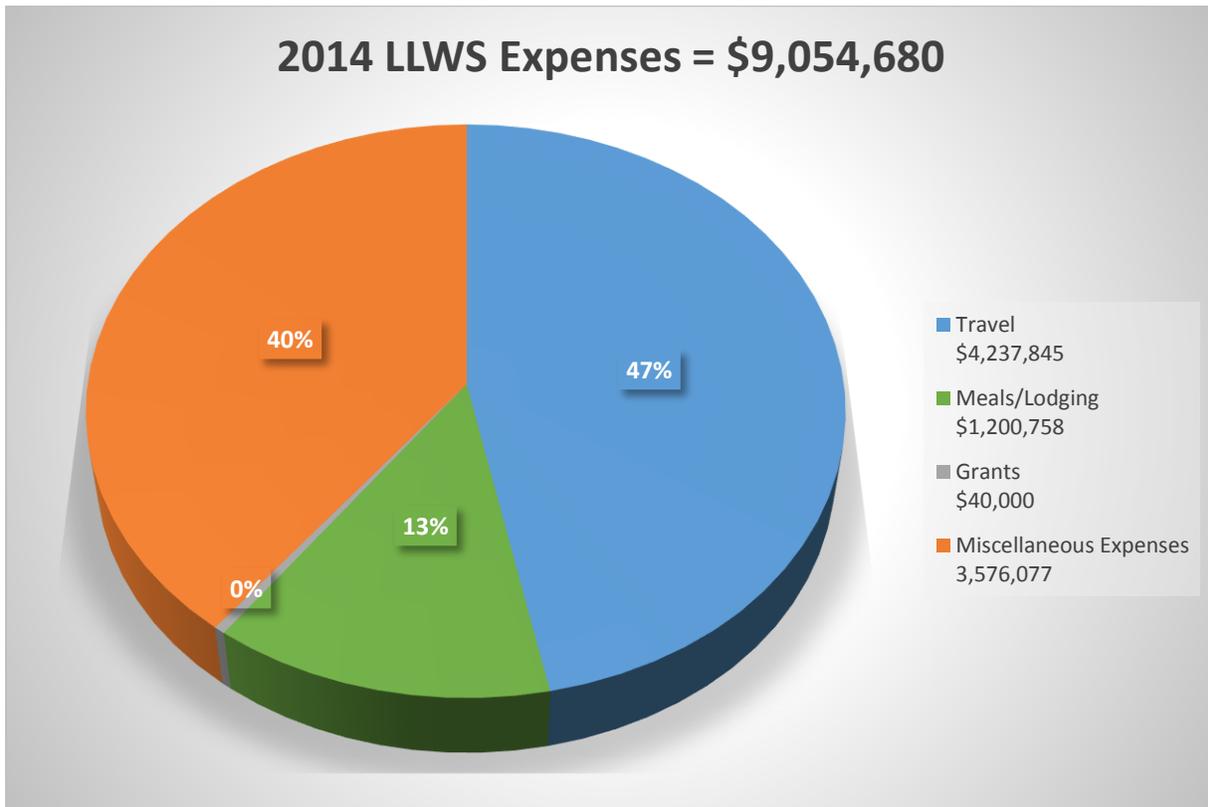


Figure 1. Expenditures of the 2014 Little League® World Series Tournaments. This pie chart shows the expenses for all nine Little League® World Series Tournaments.

Appendix D

Table 1

Results from the Leadership Trait Questionnaire for Courtney Moriarty

Courtney is:	Rater 1	Rater 2	Rater 3	Rater 4	Rater 5	Rater 6	Rater 7	Rater 8	Avg	Self-Rating
Articulate	5	5	4	4	4	5	5	5	4.625	4
Perceptive	5	5	4	5	5	4	5	4	4.625	3
Self-Confident	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4
Self-Assured	4	5	5	4	4	4	5	4	4.375	4
Persistent	4	5	4	5	5	4	5	5	4.625	3
Determined	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	5	4.375	4
Trustworthy	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	4.75	5
Dependable	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Friendly	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	5	4.375	4
Outgoing	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	4.75	5
Conscientious	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	4.875	5
Diligent	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4
Sensitive	4	5	4	4	5	4	5	4	4.375	4
Empathetic	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	5	4.5	3